

# The Black Sheep.

## Chapter LXV.

### Returning to his own.

Wearied of the battle that he and Collins had fought almost without intermission for the last six months, and eager to live his own life, and follow his own bent of mind, as he had longed to do since childhood, he decided to quit the mines, and go in search of more congenial employment. He wanted to find some kind of work that would take him out into the open, and at the same time give him an opportunity to pursue his investigations on the flora and fauna of various regions. This had been his desire from childhood. Ever since he had been compelled to leave home he had longed for unrestrained freedom in this respect. But the class struggle had been against him. The need of working for his daily bread had curtailed his opportunities, and what was more such opportunities as he might have taken had he been alone, Collins had caused him to spend in the selling of literature, in the holding of meetings, and in endless arguments about things as they might be, if they did not happen to be as they are.

Nevertheless, he was glad that George and Herman had taught him economics, and that Rudolph and Collins had made him familiar with the true nature of the class war in society. He had no delusions concerning the claw and fang nature of human economic relations. He realized that he was a slave who could only expect a slave's lot, in the world as it is. But he was not a slave in the biologic sense, for he aimed at using his brain to work himself out of that class if it were humanly possible to do so, saying that as the freedom from slavery was a collective problem with them, no matter what opportunities presented themselves to make his individual escape. "Until all are free none are free," he often quoted. For him to escape from the working class, he considered as treason in the first place, and what he would gain by it, as nothing more than a false and evanescent liberty. He maintained that there could not be freedom, in the real meaning of that word, in a two class world.

Of all this Jack took an opposite view. He reasoned that if the working classes did not want to take a hold of economic truth, and translate it into actions of liberty, that then, his duty was at an end, and that if he saw a way open to personal well being, it would be only folly not to walk in that way. He maintained that the mass of the workers were incapable

of thinking in terms of collectivism, making it sheer folly on the part of the radicals, who did see, to show the master piece of "Industrial Democracy" to congenital blind men.

A man always seeks a justification in logic for his every act, and so it was that Jack reviewed both Collins and his own views in an effort to justify his contemplated change of activity. And he naturally decided on the side of his desires—men generally do, for if reason played a determining part in their decisions this world he quits a different world.—Thus Collins desired to be an agitator, which ultimately made him a martyr, loved by a few hated by some and feared by others. It was his life, and found his reward in the consciousness that he had lived fearlessly and honestly according to the light that was in him. This alone entitles him to a place in the ranks of Earth's noblest sons. And on the other hand, Jack who was not equally impressed with the idea of agitation, would not have been honest with himself, if he had followed this line of work simply for Collins' sake. He would then have been in very truth a slave, more slavish than the masses with whom he labored. At least such were his conclusions at the time, and he followed them not without difficulty, until he found for himself a place in the world of science, where he found as much happiness as can come to one who knows the hideous arrangement of our social structure, and is not utterly dead to all human feeling. But we are digressing from the story.

Firmly decided to find other employment, and to break away from what with more bitterness than sincerity he called social fanaticism, he concluded that he would spend the next day out on the desert and gather what information he could concerning the life that was to be found on and over it. It is a mistake to think of deserts, as always barren and lifeless regions. Some of the western deserts are at certain seasons of the year richly clothed in a variety of beautiful flowers, and at all times are they dressed in sage brush of different varieties, and not infrequently are certain parts covered with the desert cedar, and juniper trees, and even, in the most barren regions, one will meet with cactus and mesquite plants, such as are never seen in less arid places. Aside from the flora we find animate life not entirely absent. There are rodents of different varieties, and species including the rabbit, and where the rabbit is found their coyote will be found also, to say nothing of birds, insects and reptiles. In truth for the

naturalist earth holds no barren ground. Jack was aware of this, and accordingly on the next morning, armed with note books and camera he started in quest of trophies.

It was a wonderful morning, as he climbed up out of the canyon in which the mining camp was located, and walked out across the plateau. The sun sailing aloft above the eastern mountains flooded the desert with what maybe called a mystic light. A mirage hung in the western skies; it was the first phenomena of this Jack had ever seen. Great mountains hung inverted in the air, and seemed to tremble in the purple desert haze. He sat down upon a ledge of rock that constituted and watched it until it faded out of the sky. It reminded him of the way he had first looked at Collins' visioning of what he called "The Industrial Republic," or as George and Herman had called it, "The Co-operative Commonwealth". In the morning of his studies in sociology and economics their appearance had been intrinsically beautiful, but like this mirage, distant and somewhat up in the air. And finally as he had studied deeper, or as one might say, when the sun of his knowledge had ascended higher the vision had trembled and finally passed from out his sight leaving only the sand and rock bound desert of reality. As he sat musingly upon his ledge of rock overlooking the desert his soul breathed a prayer to whatever gods maybe that his friends might never lose the vision, as he had lost it; that their mirage might last forever, that is, until their life that seemed to only live for their vision would mingle with its primal elements.

He arose and started on his journey across the plain. At length at the edge of a hollow washed in the plateau by the spring freshets of the mountain he saw a man standing behind some device on a tripod, and waving his arms wildly from time to time as if becoming some one at a distance. It was a surveyor who thru his transit. He was signalling his directions to the chainmen at work down in the hollow. Jack approached him and started a conversation which terminated in him being invited to share the noon lunch with the party.

He accepted the invitation, not without some hesitation for he had made up his mind to wander far afield. He would have been much further had he not stopped to watch the mirage, but now it was nearly noon and the surveyors invitation was so cordial that he felt he ought not to refuse. Now was he sorry when the crew finally assembled near a spring in the hollow, for they were a different type of men from the miners at the camp. As much so as the miners were different from a migratory worker, and as were the migratory workers from the bewhiskered guardians of the Faith at Westfield.